

## ENOC 27th Annual Conference

Brussels, Belgium

# The strength of Independent Children's Rights Institutions: upholding children's rights in Europe

**19 – 20 September 2023 - ENOC Annual Conference**

**21 September 2023 - ENOC Annual General Assembly**

### **Conference Venue:**

**Flemish Parliament**

(IJzerenkruis(sstraat) 99 – Rue de la Croix de Fer 99 – Bezoekerscentrum Vlaams Parlement – Brussels)



Co-funded by  
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*‘Children should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that [they] can fully assume [their] responsibilities within the community’<sup>1</sup>*

It is widely known that children's complete enjoyment of their rights is crucial to their full and harmonious development. However, children are sometimes not aware of their rights and are always under the responsibility, authority, and agreement of their caregivers. To successfully promote and protect children's rights, consideration of their best interests and opinions on issues that affect them is not sufficient. This year's ENOC Annual Conference will indeed focus on how Independent Children's Rights Institutions (ICRIs) in Europe can Protect and Promote children's rights to the fullest extent, by simultaneously taking into consideration their starting point and possible developments from different perspectives.

The Annual Conference will conclude ENOC's annual activities on the topic, which involved collaborative work from the experts, ENOC members, and the young people participating in the European Network of Young Advisors (ENYA). All the insights from these parallel activities are going to be presented and discussed at the Conference, and then reflected in the relevant ENOC policy statement to be endorsed by the ENOC General Assembly.

The research carried out by the experts provides useful findings for ICRIs to self-examine and discover what powers they can strengthen to ensure their independence, effectiveness, their visibility and accessibility to children, as well as the meaningful participation of children and young people in their work. Such findings will be paired with the expectations of the Young Advisors, who will share their policy recommendations as adopted during the ENYA Forum in July 2023. How ought ICRIs to be? What powers should they have to ensure they effectively monitor, protect and promote children's rights? What can they do to make themselves more visible, efficient, and accessible to all children from diverse backgrounds? Their insights will be presented at the Annual Conference, and included in the ENOC's 2023 position statement, which the ENOC General Assembly will endorse on 21 September 2023.

Ombudspersons and Commissioners for Children from across Europe and beyond are expected to attend, as are representatives of key European and International Governmental and Non-Governmental Organisations, governmental authorities, professionals, experts, and other stakeholders working in the children's rights field.

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<sup>1</sup> UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 – Preamble.

# Day 1

19 September 2023

8.30-9.00	Security screening (airport-style)
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9.00-9.30	ID checks, Conference Registration & Refreshments
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9.30-10.00	Welcoming & Opening Session
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**Moderator:** Caroline Vrijens, ENOC Chair-Elect, Flemish Children's Rights Commissioner, and Conference host

**Speakers:**

- Caroline Vrijens, ENOC Chair-Elect, Flemish Children's Rights Commissioner
- Liesbeth Homans, President of the Flemish Parliament
- Salvör Nordal, ENOC Chair, Ombudsman for Children, Iceland
- Ewa Kopacz, European Parliament Vice-President and EP Coordinator on the Rights of the Child

10.00-11.00	<b>ENYA 2023</b> <b>"Let's Talk Young, Let's Talk about Protecting and Promoting Children's Rights"</b>
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**Speakers:**

- ENYA delegates
- Suzanne Garcia Imbernon, ENYA 2023 General Coordinator

11.00-11.30	Coffee Break
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**11.30-12.15      Presentation of the main findings of the ENOC 2023 Research  
on the Role of ICRIIs**

**Speakers:**

- Prof. Ursula Kilkelly, University College Cork
- Dr. Katrien Klep, Leiden University

**12.15-13.15      Panel debate on the critical position of ICRIIs in Protecting and  
Promoting Children's rights**

**Moderator: Theoni Koufonikolakou, ENOC Past-Chair, Ombudswoman for Children's  
Rights, Greece**

**Participants:**

- Prof. Dr. Ton Liefaard, Professor of Children's Rights - UNICEF Chair in Children's Rights, Leiden University
- Marie-Cécile Rouillon, European Commission Coordinator for the rights of the child
- Regina Jensdottir, Head of the Children's Rights Division and Council of Europe Coordinator for the Rights of the Child
- Sabine Saliba, Interim Secretary General, Eurochild
- Alex Conte, Executive Director, Child Rights Connect

**13.15-14.15      Lunch**

**14.15-14.30      Group photo**

**14.30-16.00      Workshops: Updates from ENOC members**

**Moderators:**

- Niall Muldoon, Ombudsman for Children, Ireland
- Andres Aru, Head of Children's and Youth Rights Department, Office of the Chancellor of Justice, Estonia
- Theoni Koufonikolakou, Ombudswoman for Children's Rights, Greece

**16.00-16.20**

***Coffee Break***

**16.20-16.35**

**Video message UN Committee on the Rights of the Child**

**Speakers:**

- Prof. Ann Skelton - Chairperson of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child
- Benoit Van Keirsbilck - Member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

**16.35-17.15**

**The Impact of ICRIs in Safeguarding Children's Rights Worldwide**

**Speaker:**

- Geert Cappelaere, former UNICEF Representative to the EU institutions, and former Director of UNICEF Partnership Office, Brussels

**17.15-17.30**

**Wrap-up of Day 1**

- Caroline Vrijens, ENOC Chair Elect, Flemish Children's Rights Commissioner

**18.30-01.00**

**Dinner & Dance**

Address: Le Cercle des voyageurs - Lievevrouwbroersstraat 18 – Brussels

## Day 2

20 September 2023

8.30-9.00                      **Security screening (airport-style)**

9.00-9.30                      **ID checks & Refreshments**

**Moderator:** Caroline Vrijens, ENOC Chair-Elect, Flemish Children's Rights Commissioner

9.30-10.00                      **Day 2 Opening session**

**Speakers:**

- Caroline Vrijens, ENOC Chair-Elect, Flemish Children's Rights Commissioner
- Benjamin Dalle, Flemish Minister for Brussels, Youth, Media, Poverty reduction and coordinating minister for children's rights

10.00-11.30                      **ENYA Recommendations on the role of ICRIs**

**Speakers:**

- ENYA delegates
- Suzanne Garcia Imbernon, ENYA 2023 General Coordinator

**11.30-12.00**                      **Coffee Break**

12.00-12.30                      **ENOC 2023 Research: Presentation of the main Challenges for ICRIs**

**Speakers:**

- Prof. Ursula Kilkelly, University College Cork
- Dr. Katrien Klep, Leiden University

12.30-12.45                      **Protecting and Promoting Children's Rights in times of war**

**Speaker:**

- Olga Altunina, Representative of the Commissioner for the Rights of Citizens Affected by Armed Aggression Against Ukraine

**12.45-14.00****Lunch****14.00-15.30****Workshops on Participation, Monitoring, and Accessibility & Visibility****Speakers:**

- Jan Raymaekers, Coordinator, Flemish Youth Council – **Workshop ‘Participation’**
- Prof. Ursula Kilkelly & Dr. Katrien Klep – **Workshop ‘Monitoring’**
- Sibille Declercq, Director, Awel, hotline for children – **Workshop ‘Accessibility & Visibility’**

**Moderators:**

- Niall Muldoon, Ombudsman for Children, Ireland
- Andres Aru, Head of Children’s and Youth Rights Department, Office of the Chancellor of Justice, Estonia
- Theoni Koufonikolakou, Ombudswoman for Children’s Rights, Greece

**15.30-15.50****Coffee Break****CONFERENCE CLOSURE****General Assembly pre-session (only for ENOC members)****16.15-17.00****Discussion on ENOC’s Position Statement****18.30-20.30****Guided City Walk by VIZIT***Meeting Point: Warande Park (Metro station ‘Park’), Kiosk Radio*



This event is supported by the Flemish Parliament



This event is co-funded by the European Union's Citizenship, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV)